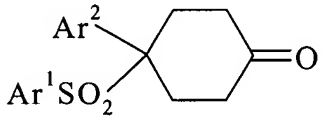
Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

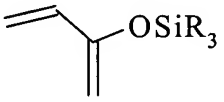
1. (Original) A method of preparing a cyclohexanone of formula (1):



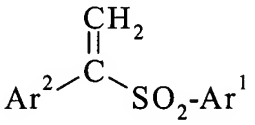
(1)

comprising:

(a) cycloaddition of a 2-trialkylsilyloxybutadiene of formula (2a) to a vinyl derivative of formula (2b):

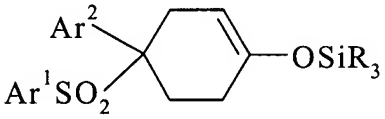


(2a)



(2b)

to form a silyl enol ether of formula (3):



(3)

and

(b) hydrolysis of said silyl enol ether to form the cyclohexanone of formula (1);

wherein, in formulae (1), (2a), (2b) and (3), R represents C_{1-6} alkyl;

Ar^1 represents C_{6-10}aryl or heteroaryl, either of which bears 0-3 substituents independently selected from halogen, CN, NO_2, CF_3, OH, OCF_3, C_{1-4}alkoxy or C_{1-4}alkyl which optionally bears a substituent selected from halogen, CN, NO_2, CF_3, OH and C_{1-4}alkoxy; and

Ar^2 represents C_{6-10}aryl or heteroaryl, either of which bears 0-3 substituents independently selected from halogen, CN, NO_2, CF_3, OH, OCF_3, C_{1-4}alkoxy or C_{1-4}alkyl which optionally bears a substituent selected from halogen, CN, NO_2, CF_3, OH and C_{1-4}alkoxy.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1 wherein the cycloaddition reaction between the vinyl derivative (2b) and 2-trialkylsilyloxybutadiene (2a) to form silyl enol ether (3) is carried out at 100-150°C in a hydrocarbon solvent under an inert atmosphere.

3. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein hydrolysis of the silyl enol ether (3) to the cyclohexanone (1) is carried out *in situ* without isolation or further purification of the silyl enol ether.

4. (Original) A method according to claim 3 wherein said hydrolysis is carried out by treatment with aqueous mineral acid at 30-80□C.

5. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein each R represents methyl.

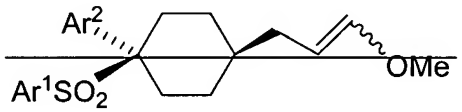
6. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the vinyl derivative (2b) is prepared by reaction of a sulphone (4):

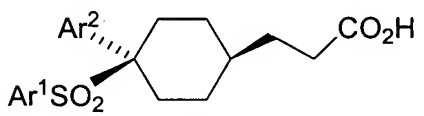
$$Ar^2\text{-}CH_2\text{-}SO_2\text{-}Ar^1$$

(4)

with N,N,N′,N′-tetramethyldiaminomethane and acetic anhydride in DMF and Ar^1 and Ar^2 are as defined in claim 1.

7. (Currently amended) A method of preparing cis-cyclohexanepropanoic acid of formula (6)~~(11)~~

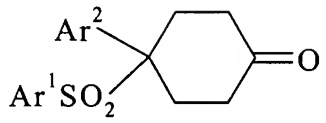




(6)

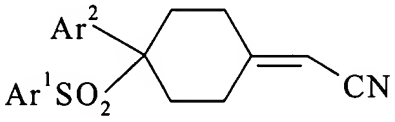
comprising the steps of:

(c) reacting a cyclohexanone of formula (1)



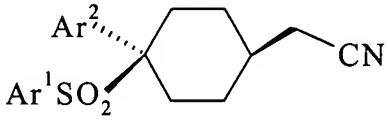
(1)

with a di(C_{1-4}alkyl) cyanomethylphosphonate and base to form a cyclohexylideneacetonitrile (7):



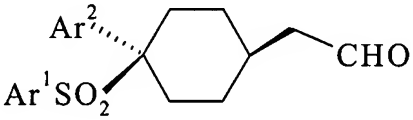
(7)

(d) reducing said cyclohexylideneacetonitrile with lithium tri-*sec*-butylborohydride to form the corresponding *cis* cyclohexaneacetonitrile (8):



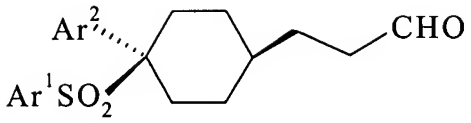
(8)

(e) sequential treatment of said *cis* cyclohexaneacetonitrile with di*iso*butylaluminium hydride and aqueous acid to form the corresponding *cis* cyclohexaneacetaldehyde (9):



(9)

(f) homologation of said *cis* cyclohexaneacetaldehyde to the corresponding *cis* cyclohexanepropanal (10):



(10)

and

(g) oxidising said *cis* cyclohexanepropanal to the corresponding *cis* cyclohexanepropanoic acid (6);

wherein Ar^1 and Ar^2 are as defined in claim 1 and "*cis*" refers to the stereoconfiguration of the side chain relative to the Ar^1SO_2 group.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 7 wherein in step (c) the C_{1-4} alkyl groups are ethyl, the reaction is carried out in THF at 0°C or below and the base is potassium *t*-butoxide.

9. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 7 wherein the reduction in step (d) is carried out in THF at about -60°C.

10. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 7 wherein the homologation in step (f) is effected by reaction of the *cis* cyclohexaneacetaldehyde (9) with a methoxymethyltriphenylphosphonium salt and strong base, followed by hydrolysis of the resulting mixture of enol ethers with aqueous acid.

11. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 7 comprising the additional step of neutralising the cyclohexanepropanoic acid (6) with sodium hydroxide to form the sodium salt thereof.

12. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein Ar^1 represents 4-chlorophenyl, 4-trifluoromethylphenyl or 6-trifluoromethylpyridin-3-yl and Ar^2 represents 2,5-difluorophenyl or 2,3,6-trifluorophenyl.

13. (Original) A method of preparing sodium *cis*-4-[(4-chlorophenyl)sulfonyl]-4-(2,5-difluorophenyl)cyclohexanepropanoate comprising the steps of:

(i) preparing 4-[(4-chlorophenyl)sulfonyl]-4-(2,5-difluorophenyl)cyclohexanone by the method of claim 1 wherein Ar^1 represents 4-chlorophenyl and Ar^2 represents 2,5-difluorophenyl;

(ii) reacting the product of step (i) with diethyl cyanomethylphosphonate and potassium *tert*-butoxide to form [4-[(4-chlorophenyl)sulfonyl]-4-(2,5-difluorophenyl)cyclohexylidene]-acetonitrile;

(iii) reducing the product of step (ii) with lithium tri-*sec*-butylborohydride to form *cis*-4-[(4-chlorophenyl)sulfonyl]-4-(2,5-difluorophenyl)cyclohexaneacetonitrile;

(iv) reacting the product of step (iii) sequentially with di*iso*butylaluminium hydride and with aqueous acid to form *cis*-4-[(4-chlorophenyl)sulfonyl]-4-(2,5-difluorophenyl)cyclohexanepropanal;

(v) reacting the product of step (iv) with methoxymethyltriphenyl-phosphonium chloride and potassium *tert*-butoxide, then hydrolysing the resulting mixture of enol ethers with aqueous acid to form *cis*-4-[(4-chlorophenyl)sulfonyl]-4-(2,5-difluorophenyl)cyclohexanepropanal;

(vi) oxidising the product of step (v) with aqueous sodium chlorite and sulphamic acid to form *cis*-4-[(4-chlorophenyl)sulfonyl]-4-(2,5-difluorophenyl)cyclohexanepropanoic acid; and

(vii) neutralising the product of step (vi) with sodium hydroxide.